

VZCZCXRO9923  
RR RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR  
DE RUEHCH #1079/01 3050831  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
R 310831Z OCT 08  
FM AMEMBASSY CHISINAU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7258  
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CHISINAU 001079

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/UMB

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/14/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [RS](#) [EU](#) [HU](#) [MD](#)  
SUBJECT: HUNGARY PLAYS ROLE ASSISTING MOLDOVA'S  
EUROPEAN INTEGRATION

Classified By: Ambassador Asif J. Chaudhry for  
reasons 1.4(b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary: In an October 27 courtesy call, Hungarian Ambassador Gyorgy Varga discussed Hungary's active role in assisting Moldova's European integration. The Hungarian Ambassador favored a firm EU decision to bring Moldova into the EU club, and suggested giving Moldova associate member status. Hungary seeks to play a decisive role in Moldova and runs the unified center for Schengen visas. End summary.

Hungary Wants to Play a Leading Role in Moldova  
-----

12. (C) In an October 24 meeting with U.S. Ambassador Chaudhry, Varga discussed Hungarian efforts to assist Moldova's European integration. He explained that Hungary had chosen to focus on Moldova as a place where Hungary could play a decisive role. Though strategically Ukraine (which shares a common border) was far more important to Hungary than Moldova, it was so large that Hungary could have little impact. Moldova was an easier place for Hungary to demonstrate leadership. The role of Hungarian citizens Kalman Mizsei as EU's Chief Negotiator on Transnistria and General Banfi as EUBAM chief demonstrated Hungary's activism in Moldova.

13. (C) Another Hungarian success in Moldova was the opening in April 2007 of the unified visa processing center. The visa center located at the Hungarian Embassy issues Schengen visas on behalf of eight countries: Austria, Slovenia, Estonia, Latvia, Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden, in addition to Hungary. Varga expected five more European countries would join the visa processing center soon: Belgium, Norway, Slovakia, Finland and Cyprus.

Varga Favors EU Associate Member Status for  
Moldova  
-----

14. (C) The U.S. Ambassador noted that GOM officials regularly spoke of their desire to be close to the EU and eventually join. The Hungarian agreed that the European Union needed to integrate Moldova. He recommended against getting bogged down in issues such as particular violations of media freedom, but instead favored taking Moldova into the EU even with all its problems. The integration process itself would help Moldova make better decisions on these issues, he argued.

15. (C) Varga said that he had suggested to the Russian Ambassador that Russia had already lost Moldova to European integration and that the most Russia could hope to achieve was keeping Moldova neutral. Varga claimed the Russian Ambassador had agreed.

16. (C) Ambassador Varga suggested that the EU should give Moldova associate member status. He cited Hungary's thirteen-year path from associate member to full member in 2004. Hungary needed 13 years to transform itself, Varga noted. Why not offer Moldova associate member status now, offering the hope that it might become a member by 2021?

What's Holding EU Back? Russia Part of the Problem  
-----

17. (C) Varga acknowledged that some European countries did not support bringing Moldova into the EU, but declined to name them. He said that some European Ambassadors focused more on Russia than Moldova and viewed the Russian factor as a dangerous complication. Varga thought it necessary to separate the issues of NATO and EU. Without NATO membership to debate, Moldova could be accepted more quickly into the EU, he hypothesized. The U.S. Ambassador responded that the West should put enough resources into Moldova to help transform the country into a more

CHISINAU 00001079 002 OF 002

prosperous one, making it easier for the EU to accept it into the fold.

18. (C) Varga said that another problem was the unresolved Transnistria issue, and argued that it needed a "macro-level solution." After Georgia, Varga believed that Russia needed to win something. Thus, it was necessary to offer something Russia wanted, i.e., Moldova's neutrality. Varga was of the opinion that, if Russia were assured that Moldova would not join NATO, it would allow a Transnistrian settlement. He suggested that Putin and Medvedev were pragmatic and actually wanted to leave this region as Russia was only losing money. One could have dialogues with Transnistria, but it all depended upon Moscow. Smirnov would be ready when Moscow was ready, Varga concluded.

Hungarian Comments on Romania's Role  
-----

19. (C) Varga noted that Romania could play an ideal role helping Moldova, but history complicated the relationship. Varga questioned Romania's motives behind its refusal to negotiate and sign a border treaty with Moldova, just as it had done with other neighbors. Instead, Romania was only pushing to sign a more modest border regime treaty which would not permanently establish the border between the two countries. The border regime treaty would only work out the logistics of operating a border and control of movement from one country to another. Varga also thought that Romania could provide more assistance to Moldova. The U.S. Ambassador noted that a border treaty, not just a border regime treaty, would reassure Transnistria and Russia that Moldova would not join Romania.

Hungarian Assistance Projects in Moldova  
-----

¶10. (C) Ambassador Varga also described Hungarian assistance projects in Moldova: helping Moldova create an ombudsman for data protection, inviting Constitutional Court members to study the Hungarian experience, and hosting young Moldovan politicians to see Hungarian political practices.

Comment

-----

¶11. (C) As a neighbor that has already carried out reforms and joined the EU, Hungary has a lot to offer Moldova, and provides a good model for successful transformation. We agree with Ambassador Varga that the firm prospect of EU membership would spur Moldova to undertake its most difficult reforms. Moldova's political and economic leaders would have EU membership as the reason for cutting into the profits and influence of entrenched interests, for cleaning up law enforcement, for reducing influential people's "privileged" access to judges for solving cases, and for making government decision-making more transparent. Without a promise of EU membership, Moldova's leaders - who already do well for themselves - will feel little real need to clean up the judiciary or stem official bribe-taking or allow media to report unhindered.

CHAUDHRY